

# Hereford Bull Demand

PHOTO BY KYLA COPELAND, FOCUS MARKETING GROUP



# STEADY

**National cow-calf survey indicates 22% of commercial cow-calf producers plan to buy a Hereford bull in the next three years.**

by **Angie Stump Denton**

Calving ease, disposition, cow efficiency and fertility are the top traits producers plan to target for cow herd improvement according to a recent industry wide cow-calf producer survey commissioned by the American Hereford Association (AHA). That's good news for the Hereford breed, which is currently in a position to deliver all four of those traits to a predominantly Angus-based cow herd.

The Web-based survey was developed by MarketSense Inc. and distributed by *BEEF Magazine*. Surveys were sent to 30,759 subscribers of *BEEF* who report beef cow inventory. A total of 1,073 surveys were returned, and MarketSense analyzed the data.

Similar surveys were conducted in 2001, 2005 and 2010. This year's survey included previous questions to identify changes in commercial cattle producers' attitudes and usage of Hereford genetics.

## Key findings

The survey showed that Hereford is recognized among cow-calf producers as the No. 1 breed for good disposition and cold tolerance

## Survey facts

63% of respondents were 51 or older and 7% were younger than 30

Median herd size: 115

Average herd size: 258

and was also the only breed that had universal acceptance across all U.S. environments.

Commercial cow herds with a Hereford base were evenly distributed between the regions and were the only breed that did not vary significantly in distribution by region — Northwest 28%, Southwest 26%, North Central and East 27%, and Southeast 25%.

"The Hereford breed has always been known for its environmental adaptability," says Craig Huffhines, AHA executive vice president. "As producers call for more cow herd efficiency the adaptability of Hereford along with its unique genetic components continues to support the Hereford breed's crossbreeding advantages."

Respondents who intend to use Hereford bulls in the next three years were significantly more likely to target improvements in cow efficiency,

heterosis and crossbreeding than those intending to use Angus bulls.

Future use of Angus bulls appears to decline slightly (6%). Hereford bull use is anticipated to remain constant. The door may be opening for additional crossbreeding with the Hereford and Simmental breeds being the two largest populations of genetics that could be a compliment to Angus.

More than half of respondents ranked seedstock providers, breed associations and veterinarians as their most useful sources of genetic information. The majority of respondents budget \$2,501-\$3,500 per bull with 11% budgeting more than \$5,500.

Slightly more than half of respondents intend to increase herd size and only a few plan to decrease herd size. This information signals the beginning of expansion of the U.S. commercial cow herd.

When breed strengths were evaluated Hereford was noted as the best alternative to compliment Angus for virtually all traits.

"There are several interesting facts coming from the factors in bull

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selection data,” Huffhines says (see graph bottom of Page 175). “The Hereford breed is positioned well to meet the demands of a predominantly Angus cow herd, but there are some real world things to think about. Not surprisingly, 73% of producers surveyed feel that polled genetics are very important in bull selection. This is not an indictment of the wealth of high-value horned genetics within the

Hereford breed, but is a market signal worth understanding.

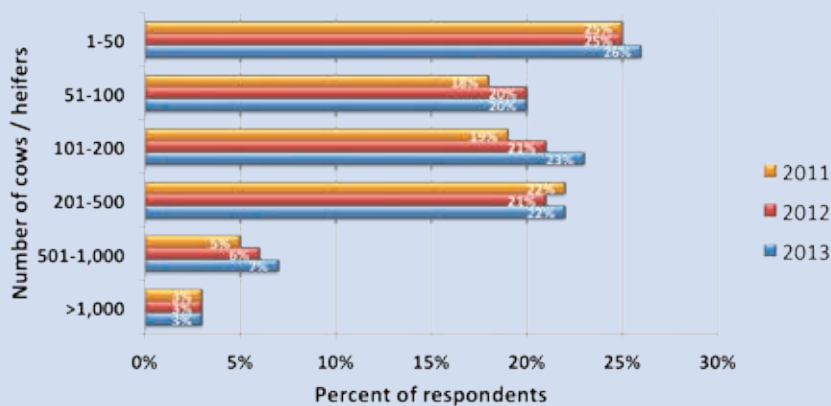
“I also find it interesting that 35% of producers surveyed believe that genomic-enhanced EPDs (expected progeny differences) are important. GE-EPDs have not been around very long, but it appears that producers are willing to adopt technology at a fairly quick pace.”

Huffhines summarizes, “For the Hereford breed to continue to gain popularity in the market place we must deliver genetics that positively influence calving ease with documented efficiency, carcass quality and marbling, and while moderating mature cow size.”

On the following pages are graphs and tables summarizing survey results.

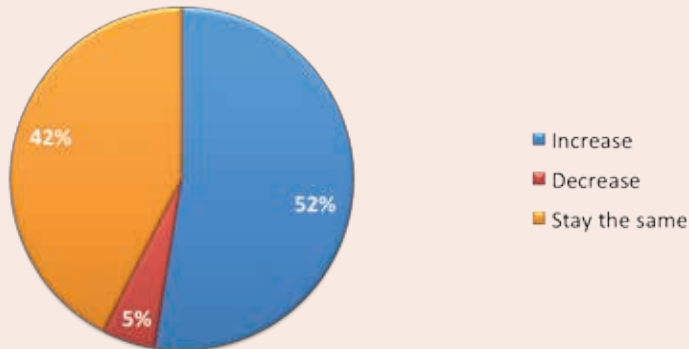
### Herd size 2011-13

Herd size has tended to increase over the last three years. A total of 5% of respondents had zero inventory in 2012 and 9% in 2011; this increase represents a re-entry into the cattle business.



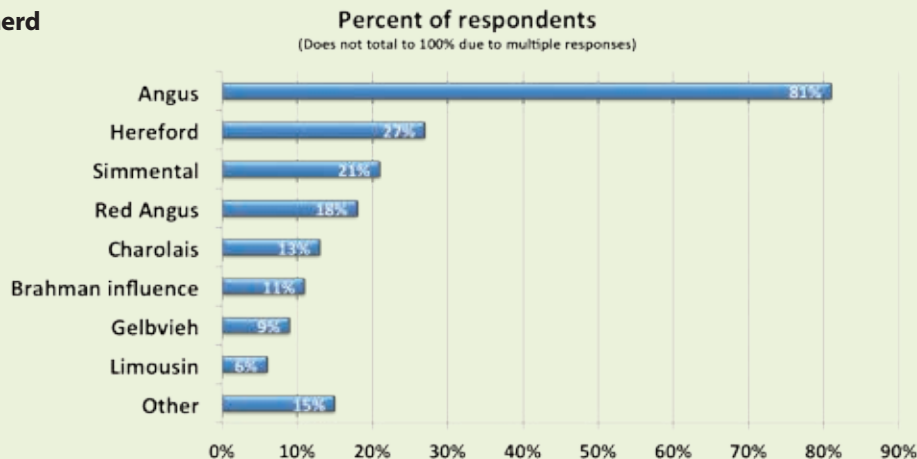
### Anticipated size of cow herd

Just over half (52%) said they intend to increase the size of their cow herds in the next three years. Respondents 31-50 years of age were significantly more likely to increase their herds in the next three years. Respondents from the Southwest and Southeast were significantly more likely to plan increasing their herds. Respondents from the Northwest were more likely to maintain their current size.



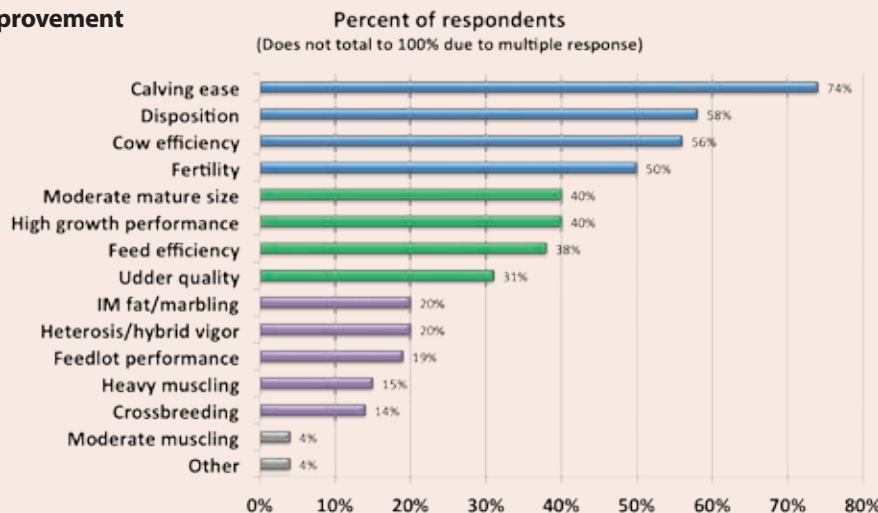
### Breed basis for commercial cow herd

Commercial cow herds were predominantly based on Angus genetics followed by Hereford. Commercial cow herds with a Hereford base were evenly distributed between the regions and were the only breed that did not vary significantly in distribution by region.



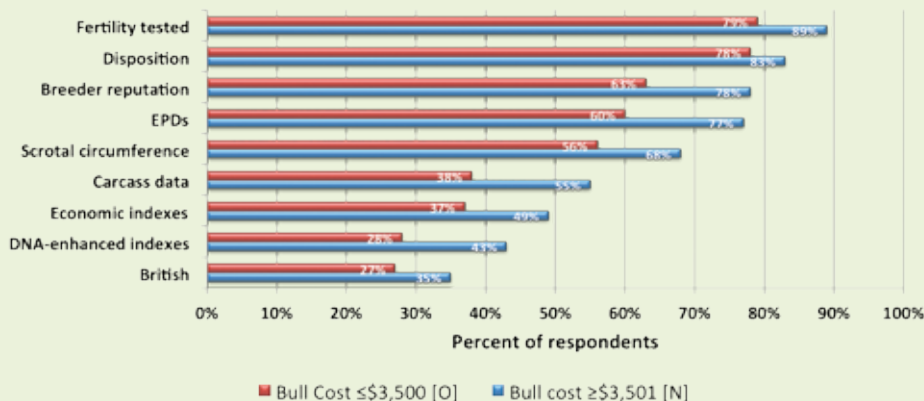
### Cow herd traits targeted for future improvement

Respondents were asked to select the top traits (up to five) they are looking to improve in their cows. When results were looked at by herd size, calving ease was somewhat more often targeted by smaller herds. Fertility, moderate mature size, marbling and feedlot performance were slightly more important to larger herds. Respondents older than 30 were significantly more likely to target calving ease and disposition than those less than 30. Cow efficiency was more important to respondents age 31-50 than to respondents in other age segments.



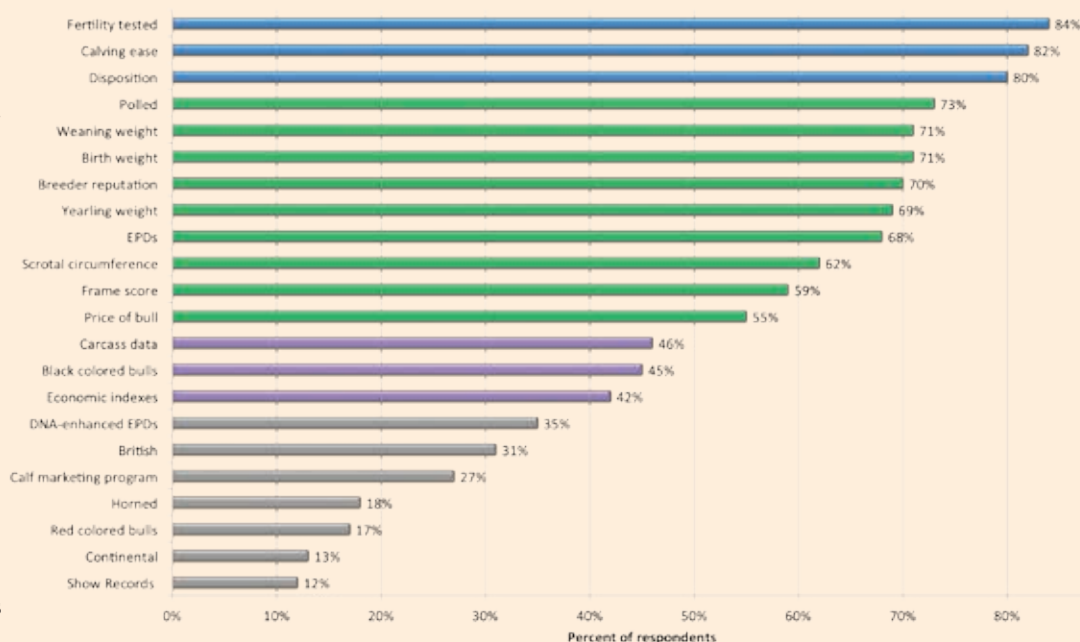
### Factors that influence bull budget

Nine of the 22 factors appeared to significantly impact bull budget.



### Factors in bull selection

Survey participants were asked how important 22 different factors were in bull selection, giving each option a score of 1 to 6. This is the top two box summary (ratings of 5 or 6). The top three factors in bull selection were fertility tested, calving ease and disposition. Respondents older than 30 were more likely to select bulls based on “ease of management” factors — disposition, polled, birth weight.



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## Comparisons — 2013, 2010, 2005 and 2001

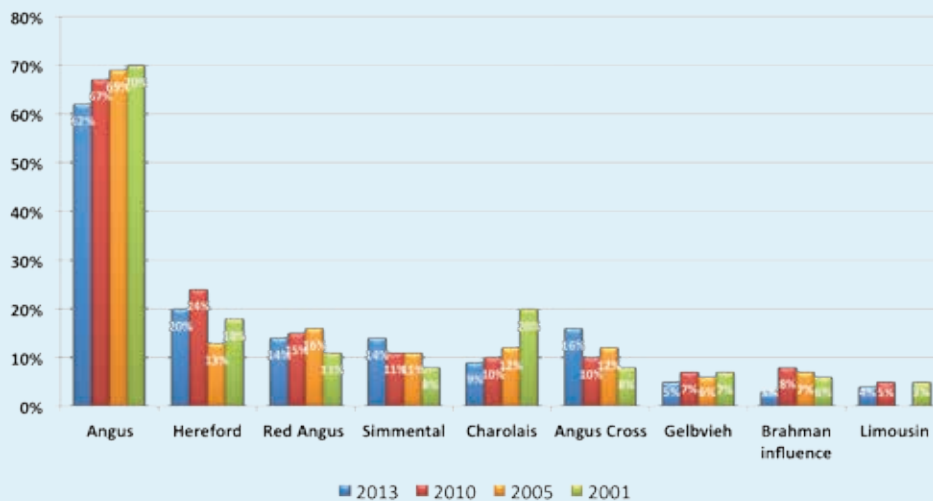
Demand for Hereford genetics has remained constant on all major usage metrics over the past four surveys — cow herd base, current bull use and intended bull use (next three years).

The top genetic traits targeted for future improvements in the cow herd have not changed nor has the relative rank.

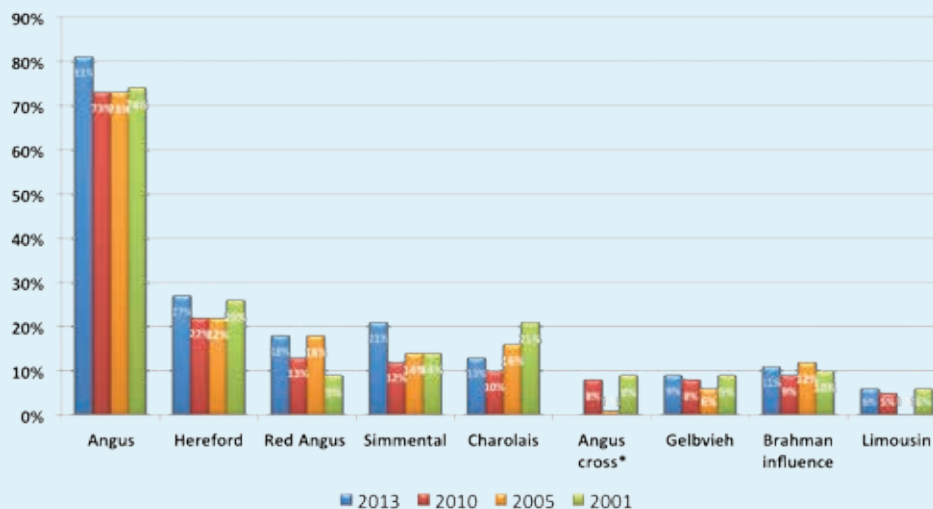
The top three factors in bull selection — fertility tested, calving ease and disposition — have not changed in the last four surveys; however, the relative rankings have changed somewhat from survey to survey.



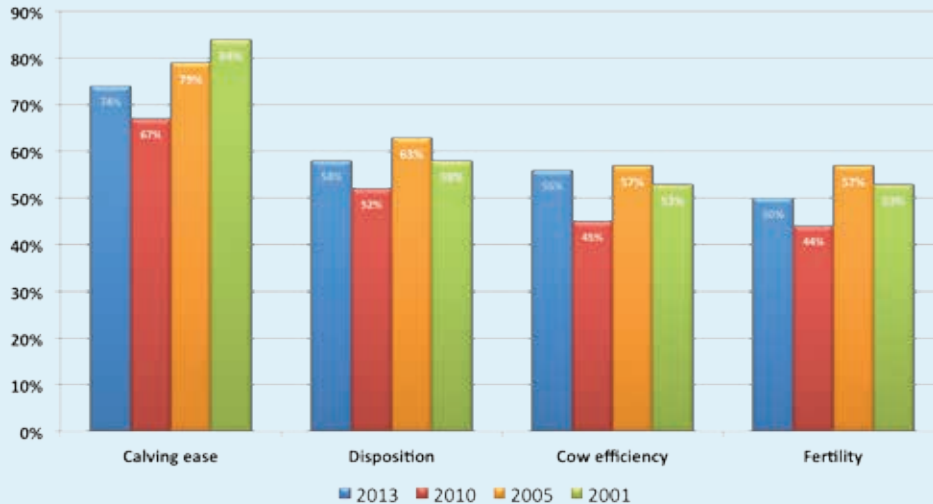
### Breed of bulls most likely to purchase in the next three years



### Genetics of cow herd base



### Top cow herd traits targeted for future improvement



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